

## 94-270 COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENTAL ETHICS AND ELECTION PRACTICES

## Chapter 2: HEARING PROCEDURES

## SECTION 1. SCOPE

These procedures shall be applicable to hearings before the Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices which have been called to consider any matter within the Commission's statutory authority. They shall be construed to secure the just, speedy and inexpensive determination of such matters in the public interest.

## SECTION 2. NOTICE

1. Due notice of public hearings shall be given by publishing such notice in appropriate newspapers and notifying those whose conduct or report is the subject of the hearing at least 10 days prior to the hearing.
2. The notice shall specify the time and place of the hearing and matters to be considered at the hearing.

## SECTION 3. PRESIDING OFFICER

1. The presiding officer at any hearing shall be either (1) the Chair, or (2) a member of the Commission selected by those members present at the hearing.
2. The presiding officer shall have the authority to:
  - A. Rule upon issues of evidence,
  - B. Regulate the course of the hearing,
  - C. Rule upon issues of procedure,
  - D. Present questions to the Commission for its determination,
  - E. Take such other action as may be ordered by the Commission or is necessary for the efficient and orderly conduct of the hearing, consistent with these regulations and applicable statutes.

3. In special cases, where good cause appears, the presiding officer may permit deviation from these procedural rules insofar as compliance therewith is found to be impractical or unnecessary.
4. The rulings of the presiding officer shall be subject to change or amendment by the Commission on motion of any Commission member.

#### SECTION 4. GENERAL CONDUCT

1. Opening Statement. The presiding officer shall open the hearing by describing in general terms the purpose of the hearing and the general procedure governing its conduct.
2. Transcription of Testimony. All testimony at hearings shall be recorded and, as necessary, transcribed, with the expenses of transcription to be paid by the person requesting the transcription. Requests for transcription must be made within 60 days of the date of the Commission's decision resulting from the hearing.
3. Witnesses. Witnesses shall be sworn. The Commission may sequester witnesses as it deems necessary.
4. Testimony. Witnesses shall testify on behalf of or at the invitation or subpoena of the Commission or on behalf of the parties to the proceeding.
5. Ethics Hearings. In hearings involving legislative ethics, any person whose name is mentioned in an investigation or hearing and who believes that testimony has been given which adversely affects that person shall have the right to testify, or at the discretion of the Commission and under such circumstances as the Commission shall determine to protect the rights of the Legislator under inquiry, to file a statement of facts under oath relating solely to the material relevant to the testimony of which that person complains. Nothing herein shall be construed to prevent the Commission from granting the right of cross-examination.

#### SECTION 5. CONTINUANCE

All hearings conducted pursuant to these regulations may be continued for reasonable cause and reconvened from time to time and from place to place by the presiding officer as circumstances require. All orders for continuance shall specify the time and place at which such hearing shall be reconvened. The staff shall notify interested persons of the continuance in such a manner as is appropriate to insure that reasonable notice will be given of the time and place of such reconvened hearing.

## SECTION 6. GENERAL EVIDENCE

1. Evidence which is relevant and material to the subject matter of the hearing and is of a type commonly relied upon by reasonably prudent persons in the conduct of their affairs shall be admissible. However, the Maine Rules of Evidence shall apply to the introduction of verbal hearsay evidence in the same manner as at a civil trial. Evidence which is irrelevant, immaterial or unduly repetitious shall be excluded.
2. Commission Evidence. Any results of Commission investigations or data gathered during Commission investigations may be introduced into the record by the Commission. The Commission may also present such other evidence as it deems appropriate.
3. Official Notice. The Commission may, at any time, take official notice of relevant laws, official regulations and transcripts of other Commission hearings, judicially recognizable facts, generally recognized facts of common knowledge to the general public and physical, technical or scientific facts within its specialized knowledge. The Commission shall include in any final written decision those facts of which it took official notice unless those facts are included in the transcript of the record.
4. Documentary and Real Evidence. All documents, materials and objects offered in evidence as exhibits shall be numbered or otherwise identified. Documentary evidence may be received in the form of copies or excerpts if the original is not readily available.
5. Objections. All objections to rulings of the presiding officer regarding evidence or procedure and the grounds therefor shall be timely stated during the course of the hearing. If during the course of or after the close of the hearing and during its deliberations the Commission determines that the ruling of the presiding officer was in error, it may reopen the hearing or take such other action as it deems appropriate to correct such error.
6. Offer of Proof. An offer of proof may be made in connection with an objection to a ruling of the presiding officer excluding or rejecting any testimony or question on cross-examination. Such offer of proof shall consist of a statement of the substance of the proffered evidence or that which is expected to be shown by the answer of the witness.

## SECTION 7. CROSS-EXAMINATION

All witnesses shall be subject to cross-examination as follows:

1. Commission members, staff and counsel may ask questions at any time.
2. Legislators in proceedings involving ethics and candidates or committees in proceedings involving their campaign reports shall have the right of cross-examination in the order specified by the presiding officer.
3. Any other person whose conduct is under inquiry in a legislative ethics proceeding shall have the right of cross-examination at a point specified by the presiding officer.
4. The presiding officer may permit oral questions outside the regular order where deemed appropriate to gain information for the Commission.

## SECTION 8. CONCLUSION OF HEARING

At the conclusion of the hearing, no other evidence or testimony will be allowed into the record, except as specified by the presiding officer.

## SECTION 9. REOPENING THE RECORD

At any time prior to a final decision, the Commission may reopen the record for further proceedings consistent with these regulations provided, however, that the Commission shall give notice of such further proceeding at least 10 days prior to such proceedings.

## SECTION 10. BRIEFS AND PROPOSED FINDINGS AND SCHEDULE

After close of the record and prior to decision the Commission may order that within a specified time any person who participated in the hearing may file briefs and proposed findings of fact with the Commission.

## SECTION 11. REPRESENTATIVES

The first document filed by any person in a proceeding shall designate the name and address of a person on whom service shall be made and to whom all correspondence from the Commission and other participants in the proceeding shall be sent.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 1 M.R.S.A. Section 1003

EFFECTIVE DATE: April 29, 1987

AMENDED: December 14, 1994

EFFECTIVE DATE (ELECTRONIC CONVERSION): October 30, 1996

REPEALED AND REPLACED: November 1, 1998; also converted to MS Word 2.0 format.